

# MIDDLE-BROOK REGIONAL HEALTH COMMISSION

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**PARTICIPATING MUNICIPALITIES**  
TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER  
TOWNSHIP OF GREEN BROOK  
BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG  
TOWNSHIP OF WARREN

December 23, 2021

Last year, I wrote in my holiday message that we eagerly awaited the distribution of the new COVID vaccines, hopeful that they would extinguish the pandemic, “and let everyone return to ‘normal,’ or maybe a new normal.” Unfortunately, that has not happened. While the vaccines have proven to be safe, and effective, or at least relatively so, a substantial percentage of the population has eschewed the protection provided by the vaccines, some with fatal consequences. The virus continues to propagate, now with the new Omicron variant which appears to be more transmissible, albeit less lethal. COVID positive cases in our member communities have escalated over the past three weeks.

The Commission continues to evolve to respond to this challenge, and other public health issues. As of January 1, 2021, we welcomed the Township of Bridgewater as a full fledged member of the Commission, to join Warren, Watchung and Green Brook. The addition of Bridgewater strengthens the Commission, while at the same time the member communities receive an enhanced level of public health services on a shared basis at a reasonable cost.

Other items of note this year are:

- Investigation with case investigators and contact tracers of 4,238 confirmed COVID cases;
- Completion of a comprehensive financial audit of fiscal 2019 with no issues or recommendations;
- Successful application for over \$340,000 in federal grant funds to respond to the pandemic;
- Employment of a Vulnerable Populations Coordinator (grant funded), a new Administrative Assistant, and an additional Registered Environmental Health Specialist;
- Initiation of school based vaccination clinics in conjunction with Commission physician Ron Frank, M.D.;



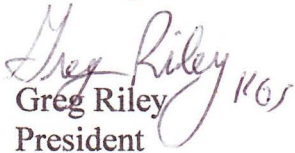
- Provision of daily COVID guidance to public and private schools, daycare centers, and countless other businesses and facilities; and
- Participation in daily and weekly telephone and zoom conferences on the local, state, and federal level.

Though dominated by COVID, the “regular” work of the Commission goes on. We continue with restaurant and food inspections, respond to environmental complaints, and investigate potential rabies cases, just to name a few. This year, the Commission redesigned and launched a new website at [www.middlebrookhealth.org](http://www.middlebrookhealth.org). Want to know if your favorite restaurant is adhering to safe food practices? We are uploading copies of the annual Sanitary Inspection Reports as they are performed. If the report for your restaurant is not there now, it will be posted after the next inspection.

The past two years have been the most challenging since I began serving on the Commission about 15 years ago. However, I believe that our staff, led by Health Officer, Kevin Sumner, has not only responded to the challenge, but has performed at the highest level of public health services since being confronted by the pandemic.

On behalf of all of the members of the Commission, I wish you and your family a happy holiday season and a healthy and prosperous new year.

Sincerely,

  
Greg Riley  
President

Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission

